

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 18 September 2018

**Report Title:** Corporate Parenting Update

**Portfolio Holder:** Jos Saunders Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

**Senior Officer:** Kerry Birtles, Head of Cared for Children & Care Leavers

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### **1. Report Summary**

1.1. This report provides an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers.

### **2. Recommendation/s**

2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:

2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.

2.1.2. Confirm that members are able to attend the corporate parenting training as set out at para 5.15

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation/s**

3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an advisory group to the Cabinet and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and young people.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

4.1. None; this is an update report.

### **5. Background**

#### **National Developments**

##### Fostering Better Outcomes

5.1. *Fostering Better Outcomes* sets out the government's response to two reports into foster care: *The Education Select Committee Inquiry into Fostering* and the Foster Care in England report, an independent review commissioned by

the Department for Education. The response describes the government's vision for foster care and improvements for the system, based on the recommendations of the two reports. Both reports state clearly that, for many children and young people, foster care provides the protective environment *that they need to develop and thrive*.

5.2. The paper sets out a vision for foster care, ie:

*Our vision is for all children in foster care to have stable lives, establish trusted relationships, to feel cared for and to benefit from high quality foster care for as long as they need it. We want a care system in which children and young people can experience a 'normal life' and to have the opportunities that other children have access to. Children's needs – and views – should be the driving force for all decisions made about their care.*

5.3. To achieve this vision, the paper sets out five overarching ambitions:

- Children are listened to and involved in decisions about their lives
- Foster parents receive the support and respect they need and deserve to care for children
- There are enough high quality fostering placements, in the right place, at the right time
- LAs commission placements according to the needs of the child
- Children experience stability regardless of permanence plan

#### Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

5.4. The Department for Education is funding, and has commissioned the Refugee Council and ECPAT (Every Child Protected against Trafficking), to deliver training aimed at foster carers and support workers who work with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). This training is not aimed at social workers. Both directly employed fosterers and independent foster agencies may be nominated for the training: the decision as to whom to nominate rests with the local authorities. Cheshire East fostering service have a number of foster carers who have been assigned to attend the training.

5.5. Also, the Home Office has revised its guidance on asylum seekers with care needs. The Home Office summarises the effect of the new guidance as follows:

- It is updated to reflect the provisions of the Care Act 2014.
- It sets a clear expectation that people with urgent care needs who claim asylum should be referred at point of claim to the relevant local authority for a needs assessment. The local authority will need to conduct the needs assessment before the person can be considered for asylum accommodation.
- It clarifies that, once the needs assessment has been conducted, the local authority will need to provide accommodation only if the person would be

- unsuitable for asylum accommodation. Otherwise (assuming the person is eligible) it will be asylum accommodation.
- It provides that a copy of the needs assessment will be sent to the accommodation provider with the dispersal request. The provider will therefore be better informed on the person's needs when allocating accommodation and will be able to liaise directly where appropriate with the local authority that conducted the assessment as well as the local authority in the dispersal area.
- 5.6. The new policy is designed to improve the service for asylum seekers with care needs, and reduce problems in the system whereby their needs may not be met due to difficulties in getting local authorities to take responsibility for assessing them. A major factor behind this was the LAs' perception under the previous policy that assessing an asylum seeker's care needs would result in the LA having to accommodate the person, even if the person did not need specialist accommodation. The revised policy addresses that concern such that LAs should understand that what they are expected to do in relation to asylum seekers' care needs is essentially the same as they would for any other person in the same circumstances.
- 5.7. Under the revised policy, in cases with urgent needs the LA at point of claim is expected to conduct the initial assessment, and to be responsible for accommodating the small number of cases where the person cannot live independently and needs social services accommodation. For those who can live independently (with care and adaptations as necessary) the information should flow through from the start of the system to help ensure the person's needs are understood, that suitable IA and DA are provided, and that the relevant LAs will be providing for the person's care needs. This should also mean that our accommodation providers will be better informed on cases with care needs, and be more able to liaise with relevant local services and to make better allocations.

The admission into school of children previously in state care outside of England (DfE guidance)

- 5.8. On 4 December 2017, the Minister of State for School Standards wrote to all local authorities and admission authorities about giving priority in their oversubscription criteria to children who have previously been in state care outside of England and have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. The key points are:
- School admission authorities are currently required to give looked after children and previously looked after children highest priority in their oversubscription criteria. On 4 December 2017, the Minister announced that when the opportunity arises he intends to amend the School

Admissions Code (the Code) to ensure that children who were previously in state care outside of England, and have ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted, also receive the same highest priority for admission into a school in England.

- Until such a time, however, the Minister wishes admission authorities to introduce oversubscription criteria to give these children second highest priority for admission into school. Any changes to admission arrangements will need to be consulted upon in the normal way.
- By children previously in state care outside of England, they mean children who have been looked after outside of England by a public authority, a religious organisation or another provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. The care may have been provided in orphanages or other settings.
- Admission authorities must ensure that they apply their oversubscription criteria fairly and lawfully. In the case of children adopted from state care overseas, admission authorities will want to satisfy themselves that a child is eligible by asking the child's parents for appropriate evidence of their previously looked-after status.
- As state care systems around the world vary greatly, some having more formal arrangements than others, the evidence provided by parents may vary. Admission authorities should take a pragmatic approach and be flexible in terms of what evidence they require from parents. Where parents are, for good reason, unable to provide clear evidence of their child's previously looked after status, admission authorities will need to use their professional judgement and common sense in deciding whether a child should be regarded as adopted from state care overseas.
- Admission authorities may find it helpful to work with other admission authorities in the area, the local authority and local Virtual School Heads to agree a consistent approach.

### **Local Developments**

#### Local Offer for Care Leavers

- 5.9. A co-produced event to develop the Local Offer for Care Leavers took place in July 2018. This event raised awareness of the need for the Local Offer and enabled a range of services, including partners, to make a 'pledge' of what their service can offer. Actions are underway to pull this together ready to launch online from October 2018.

#### Being a Good Corporate Parent

- 5.10. The first meeting of the workstream to develop priority 1 of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy, 'Being a Good Corporate Parent' met in August. One of the areas the group considered is 'what makes a good corporate parent?' Cllr Gill Merry is a member of this group and will present the findings of this group to Committee.

## Adoption Annual Report and Formal Review of the Regional Adoption Agency

- 5.11. The Adoption Annual Report, along with a formal review of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), will be reported to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> September (1.30-4pm in the Committee Rooms). Corporate Parenting Committee members are encouraged to attend for these items.

## Changing the Language for Young People in Care

- 5.12. The language of the care system can often be negative and, as a result, send the wrong messages to children and young people in the care system. A new dictionary of care which changes this narrative to a more positive one could make a significant impact. The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is working with the NHS, ADCS, the LGA, foster carers and children and young people to change the language of care. Cheshire East has volunteered to be part of this project and to feed in My Voice's view of children in care in Cheshire East. TACT's ambassador, the poet Solomon OB, has agreed to write a spoken word piece based on the dictionary which will be used to launch it.

## Corporate Parenting Identity

- 5.13. As part of our work to improve the awareness and responsibility around corporate parenting, we have been working with a local company to develop a 'corporate parenting identity'. This includes a logo and design that is instantly recognisable as corporate parenting. This will be presented to the November Committee.

## Member Training

- 5.14. Member training will go ahead on 12<sup>th</sup> October. Morning and afternoon sessions will take place in Macclesfield and Westfields. Corporate Parenting Committee members are expected to make every effort to attend one of these sessions as this training will be necessary and support members in undertaking their frontline visits within various aspects of the service.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

Legal advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### **6.3. Equality Implications**

There are no equality implications as a result of this paper.

#### **6.4. Human Resources Implications**

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

#### **6.5. Risk Management Implications**

Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors – poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood.

#### **6.6. Rural Communities Implications**

None.

#### **6.7. Implications for Children & Young People**

- 6.7.1. The contents of this report have implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

#### **6.8. Public Health Implications**

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

### **7. Ward Members Affected**

- 7.1. Although the number of Cheshire East cared for children and young people is relatively small, they are a vulnerable cohort, who live across Cheshire East and in other local authority areas.

### **8. Consultation & Engagement**

- 8.1. None.

### **9. Access to Information**

- 9.1. None.

### **10. Contact Information**

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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